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ABSTRACT

This digest, based on a larger report of the same title, summarizes principles for improving quality in higher education institutions. Emphasis is on the effect of the principles when they are used holistically to create a culture of academic excellence. The quality principles are based on the conceptual framework of total quality management (TQM) which have been demonstrated to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations. The quality principles utilize scientific outcomes measurement, systematic management techniques, and collaboration to achieve the mission of the institution. They include the following characteristics of effective organizations: (1) vision, mission, and outcomes driven; (2) systems dependent; (3) systematic individual development; (4) decisions based on fact; (5) delegation of decision making; (6) collaboration; (7) planning for change; and (8) creative and supportive leadership. Because the principles are interrelated and interdependent they need to be implemented across an entire system. Application in institutions of higher education involves measurement of outcomes, greater interdependency of institutional constituencies, leadership training, a different form of professional development, and data-based decision making. (Contains 11 references.) (DB)

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A Culture for Academic Excellence

Implementing the Quality Principles in Higher Education

Jann E. Freed, Marie R. Klugman and Jonathan D. Fife

In the context of higher education, striving for high quality is not a new strategy. Institutions have always held academic excellence and high quality as the highest goals. Achieving these goals was easier in a time of abundant resources and favorable demographics. The environment has changed. Institutions are facing decreasing enrollments and revenues while costs and competition for students are increasing.

The purpose of this report is to review the principles for improving quality in higher education institutions. For this report, we are referring to the conceptual framework of the quality movement as the *quality principles*. Individually the principles discussed are not new and unique, but implemented as a total system approach they are a new philosophical way of thinking about how institutions operate. The significance of this report is that it examines the effect of the principles when they are used holistically. Only when they are implemented as a system do they create a culture for academic excellence in higher education institutions.

What Is Meant By The Quality Principles?

The quality principles is a management approach for making higher education institutions more effective, in addition to creating an improved place to obtain a degree and a more enjoyable workplace. The principles were conceptualized and documented by authorities such as W. Edwards Deming, Joseph M. Juran, and Philip Crosby and they have been widely implemented in corporate America under the name of total quality management (TQM). The literature is abundant with articles indicating that the quality principles are proven ways of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations. Numerous companies across a variety of industries have benefitted from implementing the quality principles.

What Are The Quality Principles?

In reviewing the quality improvement literature, eight quality principles emerged. And each is discussed at length in this report. Leadership is needed early in the quality journey to create a quality culture and it is vital later in the journey to support the quality improvement efforts. Because leadership is such a critical principle, it is listed twice when the principles are identified, but discussed only once as the eight principle. *The quality principles* are:

- vision, mission , and outcomes driven
- systems dependent
- leadership: creating a quality culture
- systematic individual development
- decisions based on fact
- delegation of decision making
- collaboration
- planning for change
- leadership: supporting a quality culture

For the purposes of this report, *the quality principles are a personal philosophy and an organizational culture that utilizes scientific outcomes measurement, systematic management techniques, and collaboration to achieve the mission of the institution* Essentially, the quality principles change the culture of higher education institutions.

What Makes The Quality Principles Different?

The principles advocated in this report are interrelated and interdependent. They need to be implemented as a system drive by the vision and mission of the institution. The mission evolves and changes as stakeholder expectations are included in defining the direction of the institution. The power of the principles comes from the synergy of the whole system, fundamentally linking the mission to measurable outcomes.

How Can The Quality Principles Work In Higher Education Institutions?

The purpose of this report is to explain how the quality principles work in the context of higher education. The quality principles are essentially compatible with the values of higher education, but often the culture must change to support the principles. Most institutions have missions, but most are not accustomed to measuring the outcomes of their processes. Traditionally, constituencies within higher education institutions act independently rather than interdependently. Leaders are usually not trained in the tools and techniques used to improve systems and processes. Developing management skills and knowledge is not the norm in higher education. Professional development is more often discipline and person specific instead of developing members who can collectively improve institutional processes. Although data is collected for a variety of purposes in directing higher education institutions, the quality principles emphasize systematically collecting data before making academic and administrative decisions. Committees in academe are common, but actually collaborating and working as teams is not.

For the culture to change, members need to shift their thinking about how work is done. When the paradigm shifts, members begin to ask different questions in search of new answers to the same old problems. They embrace change as a positive value in the culture since continuous improvement is based on continuous change. People are trained to feel comfortable with change and not fear becoming involved in improvement efforts. Planning for change is an attitude to be cultivated by the leaders in the institution. Leaders are essential in creating a quality culture and they play a significant role in assuring that the necessary resources are available to support quality initiatives. When the quality principles are implemented holistically, a culture for academic excellence is created.

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